





Pelekunu Valley, a Nature Conservancy Preserve, Molokai. © Richard A. Cooke III

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# The Mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.



*Protecting Land. Water. Life.*  
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MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS

# He po‘ina kai uli, kai ko‘o, ‘a‘ohe hina pūko‘a

Though the sea be deep and rough,  
the coral rock remains standing

*~ Said of one who is steadfast  
in the face of difficulty*

The past year has doled out unprecedented challenges. The coronavirus pandemic has upended our habits, our health, our economy and our education system. We all know someone who has lost a loved one, lost their job, or is caring for children while working remotely from home.

Despite these challenges, we at The Nature Conservancy have remained steadfast in our commitment to protect the lands and waters on which we all depend—at a time when nature is needed more than ever. We’ve adapted to physically distant fieldwork, made strides in innovation, and exceeded our fundraising expectations in spite of the pandemic. We are grateful to our loyal donors, who continue to recognize the importance of our work even during this time. We have also found solace in nature, rekindling a deeply buried instinct for that connection and revitalization.

In this report, we highlight the ways we are working to restore healthy fisheries, uncover the keys to climate resilience, and protect native forests that harbor rare species and are the source of our freshwater.

In 2020, we embarked on a bold carbon offset pilot project at our Kona Hema Preserve with support from partners and donors. We published an innovative study to assess the potential for insuring Hawai‘i’s reefs from devastating storms. And we launched a partnership project at Palmyra Atoll to restore the natural nutrient cycle to the forest and surrounding reef.

This year we also began celebrating our Hawai‘i chapter’s 40th anniversary. Standing on the solid foundation set by those who came before us and looking back at all that we’ve accomplished give us the grit to forge ahead with even more determination. Because nature needs us, and we need nature.

All of this is possible because of you, our ardent supporters, who share our passion and perseverance.

Mahalo a nui loa,  
Paul and Ulalia



Paul Alston, Chair, Board of Trustees, TNC Hawai‘i chapter; and Ulalia Woodside, Executive Director.  
© Richard A. Cooke III

Healthy reefs at Palmyra Atoll are a model of resilience. © Kydd Pollock



ON THE COVER:  
Aligning with the theme of this year’s report, Palmyra is undergoing change with our work to remove invasive trees and allow the native tropical forest to rebound, which in turn restores the natural island cycle.  
© Alex Wegmann/TNC

# By the Numbers

IN 2020 AND OVER THE YEARS



A fledgling shearwater, or 'ua'u kani, at our Mo'omomi Preserve on Moloka'i © Butch Hasse

**Restoration**

**3,200**

Shearwaters across 19 acres at our Mo'omomi Preserve on Moloka'i, after removing invasive trees and fencing out predators. These beautiful birds lay a single egg once a year.

**5,000%**

Increase in native trees at Palmyra Atoll following rat removal. There was also a dramatic increase in crabs, including several species that had never been seen before.

**90,618**

Weeds removed from our Kanaele Bog on Kaua'i, which now boasts 97% native plant coverage, improving freshwater capture from the 160 inches of annual rainfall.

**1,000**

Number of endangered loulu palms (*Pritchardia schattaueri*) now thriving in our Kona Hema Preserve on Hawai'i Island, thanks to the efforts of TNC staff, partners and volunteers who gathered seeds, grew and outplanted them. Before we began this effort, there were just 13 loulu in the wild.



The mikinalo, or sundew, Hawai'i's only native carnivorous plant, is found only in wetlands on Kaua'i, such as our Kanaele Bog Preserve. © John De Mello

**Science**

**178**

Number of water quality stations TNC sampled in Maunalua Bay on O'ahu to determine the amount of runoff affecting the bay's coral reefs. This is the first and largest study on O'ahu, uncovering the concentration of prescription medications and pesticides found in the bay.

**879,767**

Number of non-native coconut trees removed at our Palmyra Atoll, paving the way for one of the last stands of native *Pisonia* forest in the Pacific to rebound.

## Firsts

- 40 years ago, TNC established the first conservation easement in the State of Hawai'i, creating Kamakou Preserve from Moloka'i Ranch, and launched the Hawai'i Chapter.
- For the first time ever, sightings of two endangered ae'o (Hawaiian stilt) not previously seen by TNC, partners or lineal descendants at our Kiholo Preserve on Hawai'i Island.
- Āholehole (Hawaiian flagtails, a common food fish) were seen in He'eia in the area cleared of mangroves for the first time in a generation.
- TNC was the first nonprofit to host a marine fellowship program in Hawai'i starting in 2008. We now have more than 13 graduates.



Ae'o are returning to the He'eia wetlands. © Sean Marrs/TNC

**People**

**34**

Staff with TNC's Hawai'i Chapter for more than 10 years. That's commitment!

10+ YEARS	20+ YEARS	30+ YEARS
24 staff	7 staff	3 staff

**50+**

Number of local communities we work with to protect and manage our nearshore fisheries.

**Ecosystem Services**

**3 MILLION GALLONS**

Daily amount of freshwater that flows from native forests like our Waikamoi Preserve on Maui, worth an estimated \$36 million.

**97%**

Amount of wave energy healthy coral reefs can absorb, which helps protect our shores.

**100%**

Amount of our islands' freshwater that native forests provide by capturing rain and mist.

**\$836 MILLION**

Value of flood protection benefits to people, property and jobs each year in Hawai'i.





We created Kamakou Preserve on Moloka'i through the first conservation easement in Hawai'i.  
© John De Mello



We mapped all of Hawai'i's rarest ecosystems for the first time.  
© TNC



MOLOKA'I



LĀNA'I



MAUI



Our preserves help protect native species, like this 'ākohekohe (crested honeycreeper), only found on Maui.  
© Jack Jeffrey



KAHO'OLAWE



We engaged community networks that integrate science with traditional knowledge and build local capacity for community management of coastal resources.  
© Manuel Mejia / TNC

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS IN HAWAII

- ◆ The Nature Conservancy has been active in Hawai'i since the late 1960s, and opened a local office in 1980.
- ◆ We forged watershed partnerships to manage more than 2 million acres of natural lands in Hawai'i.
- ◆ In 2000, we launched a marine program, working with coastal communities to protect the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.
- ◆ Also in 2000, we acquired Palmyra Atoll, bringing protection to one of the most spectacular marine wilderness areas on Earth and providing a natural research lab to study climate resilience.

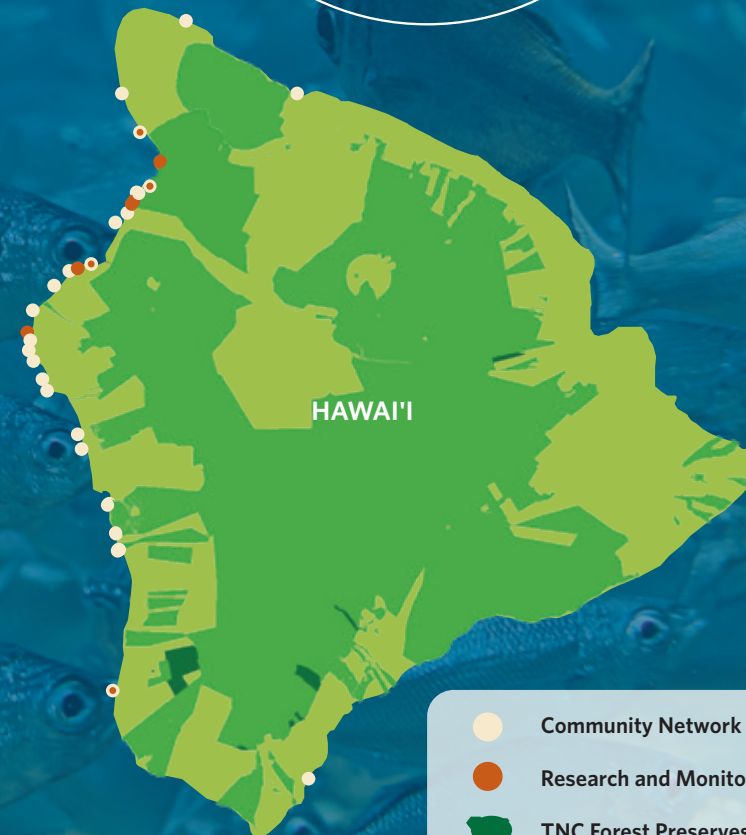
1,000 MILES SOUTH



Our purchase of Palmyra Atoll contributed to the creation of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, one of the largest marine conservation areas in the world.  
© Ian Shive



PALMYRA ATOLL  
© Graeme Gale



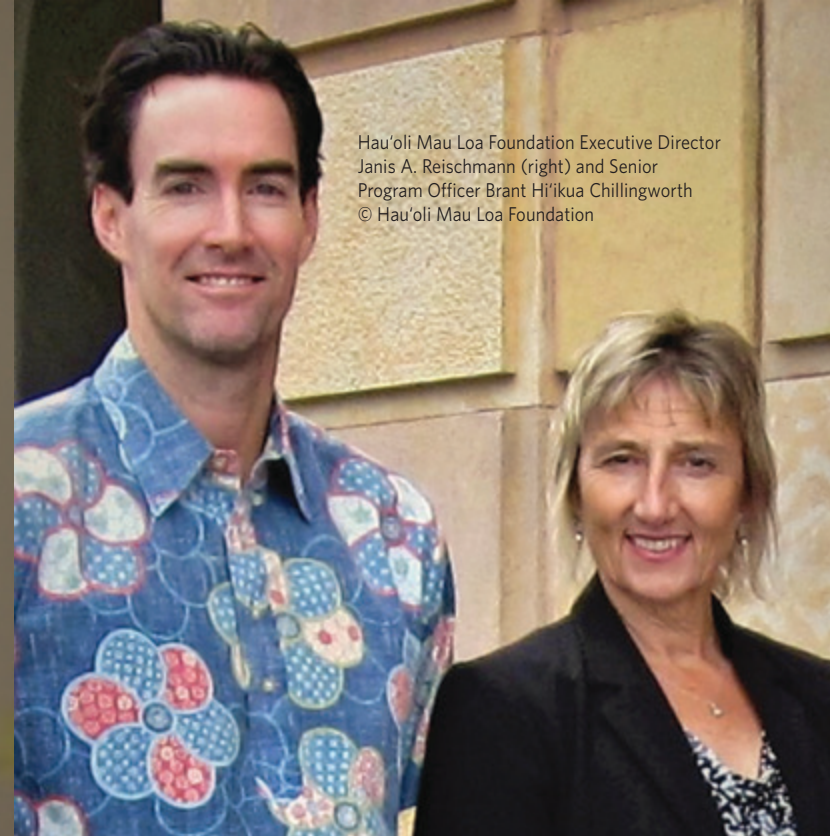
HAWAII

- Community Network Members
- Research and Monitoring Sites
- TNC Forest Preserves
- Watershed Partnerships

# Protecting Lands, Waters and Ocean



Hawai'i's native forests capture water droplets from mist and rain, accumulating fresh water that makes life in these islands possible. © John DeMello



Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation Executive Director Janis A. Reischmann (right) and Senior Program Officer Brant Hi'ikua Chillingworth © Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation



An endangered endemic 'alae 'ula (Hawaiian gallinule) in the restored wetlands at He'eia © Sean Marrs/TNC

*"The fellowship program was my north star as I worked through life changes and went back to college," says fellow Melissa Mau. "I am so grateful for this opportunity to learn and give back to my island home."*



TNC Fellow Melissa Mau helps to clear invasive plants and weeds in preparation for outplanting native plants at the He'eia wetlands on O'ahu. © Kristina Jenkins/TNC

For more than 40 years, we have worked with landowners, businesses, government agencies, academic institutions and communities to conserve our island's natural areas. Here, we share a few glimpses from the past year, highlighting our accomplishments to protect Hawai'i's and Palmyra's unique landscapes and species that sustain us.

We have seen visually dramatic native vegetation recovery after removing ungulates (alien hoofed animals like pigs and deer) from Waikamoi Preserve. Ungulates are voracious foragers; a single pig can disturb an area the size of a football field in just seven days, destroying the native forest understory in the process. Removal of these animals allows the natural forest to rebound.

Elsewhere in the world, mangroves serve an important role in coastal and island habitats, but in Hawai'i, they are invasive and damage the natural balance of our unique ecosystems. Our work to remove mangroves and restore the natural habitats at He'eia on O'ahu has led to the unprecedented return of native wildlife to the wetlands, with increased sightings and nests of endangered ae'o (Hawaiian stilt) and 'alae 'ula (Hawaiian gallinule), as well as native fish like the āholehole (Hawaiian flagtail, a common food fish).

This year, we published *The Atlas of the Reefs of West Maui*, a first-of-its-kind report compiling 20 years of data. Our analysis shows where reefs are doing well and where they are in decline and will help guide reef management and restoration efforts.

## DONOR PROFILE

### Building the Next Generation of Leaders

Since 2011, the Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation—whose mission includes promoting stewardship, preservation and protection of Hawai'i's natural environment—has partnered with the TNC Hawai'i Chapter to support our Marine Conservation Fellowship Program designed to increase the local pool of qualified marine resource managers. The fellowship provides two years of on-the-job training in traditional and contemporary resource management and promotes direct experience through community-based projects and field work.

"Now more than ever, we need capable leaders to step up," says Brant Chillingworth, Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation Senior Program Officer. "Fellowship graduates are already making their mark in conservation careers and academia."

Graduates of the program have become scientists and leaders with state and federal agencies, or lead local nonprofits like partner Hui Aloha Kiholo.

"Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation is an amazing partner," says TNC's Marine Fellowship Program Coordinator Sean Marrs. "Their unwavering support and investment are helping us expand the pool of young professionals to guide marine conservation into the future."

Native plant recovery in Waikamoi Preserve over just four years © TNC



# Tackling Climate Change

The impacts of a changing climate are extremely challenging. A poll we conducted in 2020 revealed that more than half of Hawai'i residents feel climate change will cause them "great" or "moderate" personal harm, and support the work we do—from managing forests to restoring nearshore fisheries to removing invasive species.

Mosquito-borne disease can have devastating impacts on people and nature—and is worsening with climate change. At Palmyra Atoll, we are field testing a method to render male mosquitoes infertile. If successful, we will eradicate the small population there and provide lessons learned to help Hawai'i's efforts to suppress mosquito-borne diseases that are pushing the islands' endemic forest birds toward extinction.

We initiated the first statewide coral restoration planning process in partnership with the State of Hawai'i and NOAA to increase our reefs' ability to resist and recover from bleaching events, which scientists predict will continue to increase due to warming oceans, land-based pollution and other stressors.

Our fifth year of reef resilience surveys along the west coast of Hawai'i Island showed corals continuing to recover from the 2015 mass bleaching event and identified the most resilient reefs as those with healthy herbivorous fish populations and clean water and those located farthest from human populations—for example in North Kona near our Kiholo Preserve.

Conducting reef resilience surveys in West Hawai'i © David Slater



## DONOR PROFILE

### Hooked by Palmyra

*"If I were to do my life all over again, I would love to be in the scientists' slippers. I get so excited about it all."*

Coral gardens on Palmyra © Kydd Pollock

When Balbi Brooks visited Palmyra Atoll in 2016, she was hooked. "I didn't want to leave!" she says. "It was, and still is, one of the most incredible places I've ever been."

She first fell in love with Palmyra's flora and fauna, then she discovered a passion for TNC's conservation science.

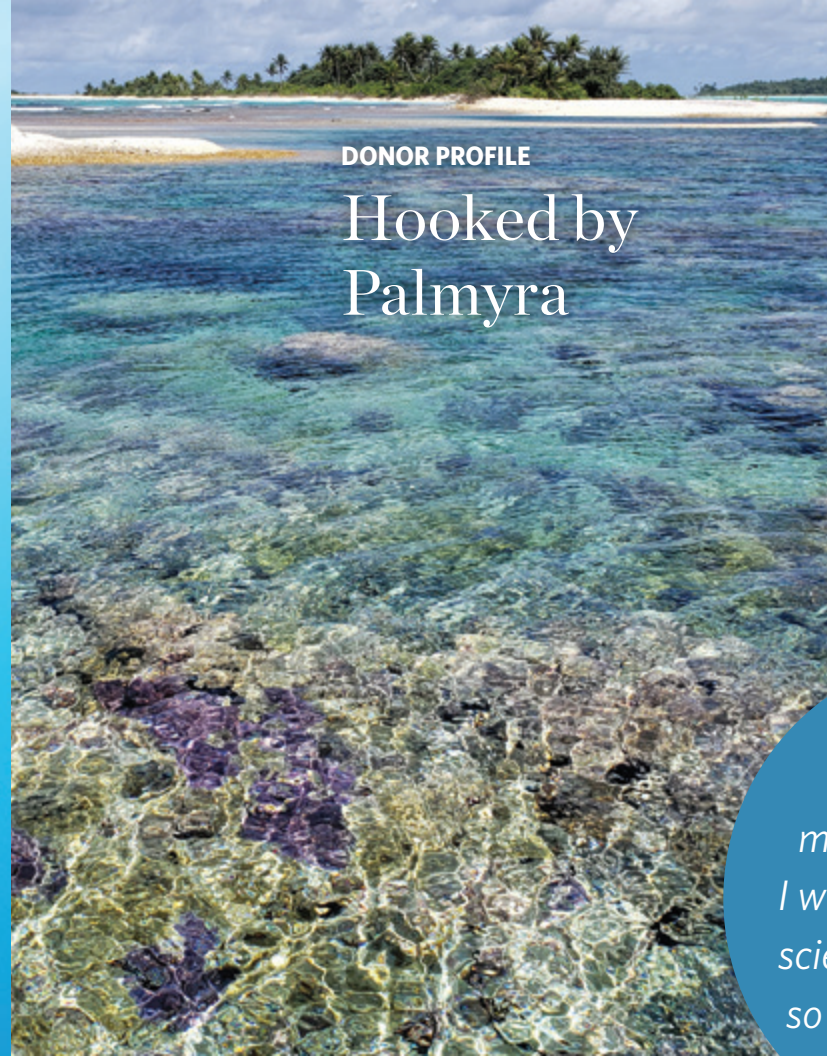
"Balbi has a pure love for Palmyra," says Dr. Alex Wegmann, Palmyra's Director of Science. "Even when the weather was bad, she loved it. She passed up snorkeling and social hour to plant trees. Her enthusiasm for conservation science is infectious and so much fun."

"Balbi's consistent, enthusiastic support has been invaluable," says Wegmann.

Balbi enjoys being part of the science that gives her a taste of a road not traveled.

*"If I were to do my life all over again, I would love to be in the scientists' slippers. I get so excited about it all."*

Balbi Brooks heads to her favorite beach on Palmyra. © TNC



Brown-footed booby with chick on Palmyra © Rob Shallenberger



# Exploring Innovative Solutions



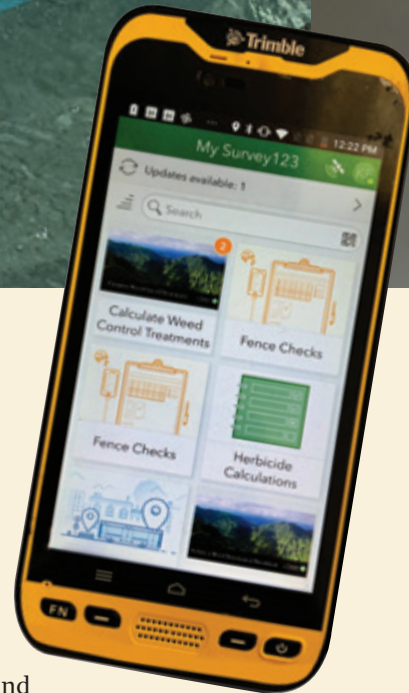
TNC's Palmyra Program staff measure and tag a trevally before releasing it. © Kydd Pollock/TNC

State-of-the-art technology helps us monitor threats and increase efficiency, which is especially important during COVID-19 limitations. Remote cameras and traps, drones, mobile apps and interactive data visualization help us examine fisheries data, check fence lines for security breaches or tree falls, and identify where disease might be spreading. A new TNC report explores the innovative potential for insuring Hawai'i's reefs from devastating storms.

At Palmyra Atoll, our Fishing for Science project is analyzing catch-and-release data for key fish species—like giant trevally and bluefin trevally—targeted by tourism-based recreational fisheries internationally. To date, we have tagged 295 fish. Findings from this project will inform sustainable fisheries management throughout Oceania.

We developed mobile apps for our Maui and Kaua'i forest teams so they can easily and quickly capture and record information about native species, weeds and remote cameras in real time, eliminating hours of manual entry from handwritten field notes. The apps also increase data accuracy and consistency and allow for efficient processing and sharing of data.

Using FishPath, a data visualization tool, Hawai'i island communities can interactively explore available fisheries data (such as life history and historical fishing effort and catch) to develop culturally appropriate and science-based guidelines to ensure sustainable harvest of food fish.



An 'amakihi (Hawaiian honeycreeper) in our Kona Hema Preserve © K.C. Choo



Benjamin and Carole Fitzpatrick © Christopher Balzotti

Benjamin and Carole Fitzpatrick's connection to Hawai'i Island began in the mid-1980s, when they were drawn to the upland forest in search of native birds. A little more than 10 years ago, they hiked into TNC's Ka'u Preserve and learned about TNC's vision to protect and preserve the species within the native forest.

Their meeting in 2017 with Shalan Crysdale, Hawai'i Island forest program director, allowed them to see the changes since their first visit, and better understand how our approach benefits the entire forest ecosystem. Carole shared, "It's very rewarding for us both to be part of TNC's success and what it represents for the future of Hawai'i's native birds."

The Fitzpatricks recently renewed their multi-year pledge to Ka'u, which allowed TNC to leverage additional state matching funds for the project. They have also created a lasting legacy for Hawai'i forest bird habitat by including TNC in their estate plans. According to Shalan, "Ben and Carole's long-term commitment provides us with a strong foundation to safeguard the unique species that give life to a healthy forest."

## DONOR PROFILE

### For the Love of Birds

*"It's very rewarding for us both to be part of TNC's success and what it represents for the future of Hawai'i's native birds."*

Ōma'o © Mark Kimura



An ōma'o bird eats ōlapa tree berries in Kona Hema Preserve. © Jack Jeffrey



Caleb Wittenmeyer operates a drone in Waikamoi Preserve. © TNC

# Working During COVID-19

Despite travel and gathering limitations due to COVID-19, our team set out with partners and community members—wearing masks and working six feet apart—and collected 46,000 pounds of commercial fishing nets, plastic trash and other rubbish (about as heavy as six adult humpback whales!) from Mo'omomi Preserve and nearby beaches in December.

Our teams worked with TNC's dive safety officers and managers to establish protocols for operating responsibly in the field during COVID-19. Team members drive separately to sites, handle only their own gear, wear masks, maintain a six-foot distance both on land and in the water, and disinfect all equipment before and after surveying.



DLNR-supplied helicopter lifts debris off Mo'omomi's coast. © Richard A. Cooke III



Top: Palmyra science volunteer James Yost wears a mask while conducting field work. © Sarah Glover

Middle: Hawai'i Island Marine Program Manager Rebecca Most en route to monitoring reefs at Ka'upulehu © TNC

Bottom: Staff on Maui physically distance and wear masks while unloading gear dropped by helicopter. © TNC



# The Power of Partnerships

Many of our accomplishments over the past 40 years have only been possible because of strong partnerships. Despite travel and gathering limitations as a result of COVID-19, we've continued to achieve conservation outcomes through our partnerships with hundreds of community, state, federal and non-profit groups across Hawai'i, Palmyra and beyond. Here are a few examples from 2020:

- In partnership with the Sustainable Business Forum, we are working to bring a carbon offset pilot project to market. The project, located at our Kona Hema Preserve on Hawai'i Island, could generate up to 100,000 carbon emission offset credits in the first six years.
- This year, we led a study based on years of data collected by Hui O Ka Wai Ola, a multi-organization citizen science water quality monitoring partnership on Maui, to identify sources of excess nitrogen from land that will help inform management actions to improve coral reef health.
- With our partner Skyline Hawai'i, we planted native trees at their ecotourism site on Maui, where dying eucalyptus trees were felled last year. Then, together we tackled invasive Himalayan ginger at a critical section in our Waikamoi Preserve.
- We led a multi-agency effort to control an emerging population of highly invasive Australian Tree Fern on Moloka'i, resulting in a plan to



control the spread, which will be implemented by TNC and partners.

On Maui, we facilitated eight community-led Conservation Action Planning (CAP) processes with multiple stakeholders and partners, including 25 community members from four East Maui communities. Empowering communities nurtures cooperation and builds local capacity for conservation management.

With support from the State Department of Land and Natural Resources, we flagged the fence line and identified locations for helicopter landing zones, stepovers and gates in preparation for building new fences to protect the native forest and streams in the Alaka'i Plateau adjacent to our Wainiha Preserve on Kaua'i, thus enlarging the total area protected.

We co-authored, with the Maui Nui Makai Network, the *Mālama I Ke Kai: Community Action Guide* to help groups in Hawai'i successfully undertake community-based management of coastal and marine resources, using a proven step-by-step process.

We launched the Palmyra Atoll Rainforest and Reef Resilience Project with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Island Conservation. The project will restore seabird-driven nutrient contributions to the forest and surrounding reef, increasing the atoll's resilience to climate-related impacts.



Partnerships enable bigger conservation accomplishments. © TNC

Alu Like summer youth workers build a boardwalk across Pepe'ōpae Bog in Kamakou Preserve in Moloka'i in 1985. ©TNC



Then-TNC Executive Director Kelvin Taketa (far left) gifts the late Senator Inouye a print of the rare 'Akohekohe bird found only in Waikamoi Preserve on Maui. © TNC

# Make a Larger Impact for Nature

Have you ever thought about the smartest way to do your charitable giving? These gift options may enable you to make a larger gift to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to conserve the lands and waters you love, while also helping you accomplish your financial and other goals.

- 🌿 **IRA:** If you are 70½ or older, you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA to TNC. Your donation may count toward your Required Minimum Distribution and be excluded from your taxable income.
- 🌿 **Securities:** Gifts of appreciated stock or mutual fund shares held for more than one year can offer a tax-efficient way to give. You may be able to both receive a charitable income tax deduction and reduce capital gains taxes.
- 🌿 **Real Estate:** If your vacation home, rental property or other real estate no longer fits your lifestyle or is a potential tax burden, consider donating it to TNC. We will handle the sale, and you may be able to receive a charitable income tax deduction and reduce capital gains taxes.
- 🌿 **Bequests:** Through your will or trust, you can name TNC as the beneficiary of specific assets, a portion of your estate or your residual estate.
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- 🌿 **Gifts that Pay Income:** There are gift options that provide you and/or your loved ones with income for life, may provide tax savings, and support nature in the future.



As we pause to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we honor those who came before us. We continue to transfer wisdom and knowledge to the next generation of caretakers of our special places.



TNC's Renee Miller enjoys the beauty of Waikamoi Preserve. © Ian Shive

*"We are honored to stand on the shoulders of Ed Misaki and Brian Naeole, who retired this past year, and are grateful for their teachings about perseverance, what it takes to be a team and how to create tangible, lasting results."*

Russell Kallstrom  
Information Manager  
Moloka'i Program



Technology like solar-powered remote cameras and relay stations on mountaintops help track invasive weeds and potential fires. © TNC

We can help you decide on a gift that's right for you. To discuss gift options or notify us of a legacy gift in your estate plans, please contact Lara Siu at (808) 587-6235 or [lsiu@tnc.org](mailto:lsiu@tnc.org).

*The Nature Conservancy cannot render tax or legal advice. The information provided above is general in nature and is not a representation as to the actual tax consequences of a particular contribution to TNC. Please consult your professional financial adviser before making a charitable gift.*



Halawa Valley on Moloka'i © Richard A. Cooke III

# In Hawai'i, the environment *is* the economy.

**That's why these leading companies invest in The Nature Conservancy.** They understand that our environment and economy are intrinsically linked: Native forests collect fresh water, coral reefs protect our coastline, and native species are fundamental to a living Hawaiian culture.

We want to thank and recognize the members of the Corporate Council for the Environment for their commitment and generosity. To learn how your company can join the Corporate Council, please contact Amy Kreidler at (703) 283-8024 or [amy.kreidler@tnc.org](mailto:amy.kreidler@tnc.org).

## Corporate Council for the Environment

### Ho'omau Member: \$15,000+

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Ulupono Initiative

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